

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 13, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

The attached Report was prepared in response to my memorandum of October 10 concerning career training for young employees in the federal government.

The report represents a preliminary attempt to probe the opinions, concerns and problems of young employees in the federal government. Too often in the past, evaluations of trainee programs have proceeded from the top down, involving the young employee only in the end results. This time, through the creation of youth committees in each agency and through a questionnaire survey, a significant number of young people have been involved from the very start.

Though the overall picture emerging from the questionnaire indicates a considerable degree of job satisfaction, two findings stand out: 1) only half of the employees questioned feel now that their job is as good as they thought it would be when they were hired; and 2) when asked about future plans, 35% plan to leave the federal government.

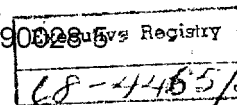
These findings should remind us, clearly and forcefully, that the Federal Government cannot rest content in the continuing challenge to motivate and develop its young employees to the highest level of their ability.

I note with encouragement the variety of actions already initiated by the new youth committees to improve communications, enhance job opportunities, reexamine training systems and improve summer intern programs. These actions are hopeful signs of progress and change.

I ask you to bring this Report to the attention of your successor. It is my firm hope that the new Administration will capitalize on this momentum, broaden the mandate and membership of the youth committees and explore the feasibility of the recommendations made in this Report.

MORI/CDF Pages 14 thru 26 &
pages 27 thru 30.

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YOUNG PROFESSIONALS
IN THE
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

REPORT PREPARED BY U.S. CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

I. BACKGROUND

A. Mandate for the Study

In his memorandum of October 10, 1968, the President expressed his personal interest in the improvement of agency efforts to attract and develop talented young people for the Federal service, directed a review and evaluation of existing efforts in this direction, and designated the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission to coordinate a pilot study of youth in the Federal service.

The Chairman, by his memorandum of October 17, communicated further details concerning the study to department and agency heads and their personnel directors, informing them also that the Director, Bureau of Training, had been designated as project manager. The nature and purposes of the study were discussed at some length in a meeting between Civil Service Commission representatives and agency committee chairmen on October 27; during this meeting Dr. Doris Kearns, Staff Assistant to the President, reemphasized the President's personal concern.

B. Basic Features of the Study

In consonance with the President's expressed concerns, the study involved two principal components: a review and evaluation of career trainee systems, and an inquiry into the career trainees' perceptions of and reactions to their Federal employment thus far.

1. Review and evaluation of career trainee systems (agency committee study) 1/
In his mandate for the study, the President asked each department and agency "to create a committee through which young trainees representing various disciplines and programs can review and evaluate all aspects of the systems through which they have become part of the Federal workforce." The composition of these committees included representation from present and recent past career trainees, the agency head's immediate staff, the agency personnel office, and line managers and supervisors who have worked with career trainees. For the purposes of the study, "career trainee" was defined as any employee appointed to an entry-level position requiring a bachelor's degree or equivalent experience, i.e., a position which would be the basis of a career ladder leading to a middle or higher-level position in an administrative, professional, or technical field. In conducting their reviews, agency committees were asked to: review policy statements and guidelines for career trainee programs; examine career trainee programs as they were actually functioning; evaluate these programs' effectiveness in meeting objectives; and describe plans for the future. Agencies were

1/ The Division of Manpower Sources, Bureau of Recruiting and Examining, U.S. Civil Service Commission conducted this phase of the study.

asked to comment on: management of career trainee systems, career trainee assignments, education and training, selecting and motivating supervisors for career trainees, counseling career trainees, and program evaluation. Agency committees were also asked to respond to the specific questions suggested in the President's memorandum of October 10.

The total number of departments and agencies receiving and responding to this phase of the study was 50.

2. Inquiry into the perceptions of and reactions to Federal employment (career trainee questionnaire study).² A questionnaire was designed to develop information concerning career trainees' attitudes and opinions about their job and work environment, their feeling toward the training they have received, and their ideas for bringing about a greater sense of involvement in the work of their agencies. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part I was directed toward biographical and training information. Parts II and III were directed toward job attitudes and job satisfaction (using both specific and open-end questions), and toward possible changes to increase career trainees' involvement (similarly using both specific and open-end questions). In 47 Federal agencies in the Metropolitan Washington area, 3536 employees were identified as meeting the definition of "career trainee" cited in subparagraph 1 above and in addition, the following criteria: entered their first full-time Federal employment in fiscal year 1968, and were under age 30 on the date of entry. These 3536 employees received the questionnaire. 2882 (82%) of the questionnaire were returned and have been included in the analysis; this is considered a higher-than-average percentage return for this type of study.

^{2/} The Personnel Measurement, Research and Development Center, Standards Division, Bureau of Policies and Standards, U.S. Civil Service Commission conducted this phase of the study.

II FINDINGS

The quality of career trainee programs varies widely from one agency to the next. Some agencies are simply not devoting enough staff effort to the refinement of systems for recruiting and developing young talent. Other agencies are devoting considerable staff effort but the effort is not fully effective because the young trainees themselves are not involved in the process of planning and running the program. Still other agencies are marked both by significant staff concern and by serious attempts to involve the young trainees in the development of the program.

An analysis of agency responses, as well as individual reactions to the questionnaire, has led us to group the findings into five categories: participation of minority group members in trainee programs; development of linkages between young careerists and academia; general communications; job opportunities; and continued education.

PARTICIPATION OF MINORITY GROUP MEMBERS IN TRAINEE PROGRAMS

. recruitment: In response to the President's question about how to increase minority group participation in trainee programs, agencies universally suggest aggressive recruitment efforts. Most of these efforts are already under way. Recruitment at colleges with predominantly minority group enrollment is intensive. (One study revealed that one in five recruiters visiting such schools is a Federal representative.) There is also aggressive recruiting of minority members at other colleges, often with help from local chapters of minority group organizations. Many agencies are using recent minority graduates as recruiters.

. increasing supply: Yet as one committee points out, for the Federal agencies to spend most of their time competing with one another to attract the top 10% of the minority students who already qualify for government programs is in many ways self-defeating. The supply of qualified minority trainees must be increased.

Several agencies are actively involved in programs designed to increase the supply of minority trainees. But in contrast to the vigorous action in the recruitment area, most of the possibilities in this other area have not been fully explored

Suggestions for action include:

. in-house training programs: The development of comprehensive plans for identifying and selecting employees already on the work force who do not meet established standards for career trainee positions but who do have the potential for growth, skill development, and success in career training. Such plans might include agency sponsorship of high school equivalency certification, agency payment for off duty courses taken by minority employees, and special programs of coaching and training.

. work-study: The use of key faculty from minority schools to help in curriculum and student development for Federal employment. These officials, as agency consultants, would learn about the agency's staffing requirements and advise the schools how to shape their curricula and develop work study plans to qualify their students for work with that specific agency. Other suggestions include increased use of cooperative education, junior fellowship programs, and other programs that combine experience with education.

. non-written exams: Greater use of the 'superior graduate' concept which permits appointments without the necessity for written tests; development of courses to prepare minority members for the FSEE.

USING YOUNG CAREERISTS AS LINKS TO ACADEMIA

. recruiting: The great majority of the responding agencies cited recruiting as the prime way in which the young worker can serve. They also suggested that young people serve as panelists for speakers on campus programs, thereby building interest in government job activities and career goals.

. summer intern programs: While a number of the committees recognized the great potential of summer intern programs as recruiting devices and as linkages to the academic community, very few seemed to feel that the actual practice was living up to expectations. Too frequently hopes for true summer intern programs were hampered by a lack of planning and resources. Too many jobs were clerical; most of the work had too little training in it. Several committees suggested that young career trainees be given responsibilities for designing and implementing new summer intern programs, serving as proctors for the college students, and developing seminars and task forces to exchange ideas and opinions.

. apprenticeships: One agency described a successful program for bringing in teams of selected high school and college students to work under the tutelage of department scientists and engineers on a non-pay basis for a few hours each week.

. hearings: A few committees moved beyond their organizational interest in recruitment to suggest ways in which their young employees might relate more fully to the young population on the campuses and in the cities. One committee suggested that young employees design hearings and debates for groups of students across the country. The objective of these hearings would be to bring the government to the student community; to establish personal access to the various departments of government. To accomplish this goal, the agency must be prepared to provide students with accurate preparatory information concerning government policies and programs and reasons supporting agency decisions. At the same time, the agency representatives must be ready not only to listen to student ideas but to carry them back to the places where they can be carefully considered.

. volunteerism: Another committee suggested that Federal agencies show their support for volunteer activity among their young employees by allowing released time for certain volunteer work.

. youth offices: Several committees suggested separate youth offices to give Federal interns direct responsibility for the operation of programs and to provide a link with the young people in cities and on campuses. One such model already exists in the Department of Labor.

COMMUNICATIONS

. problems and frustrations: The state of communications between young trainees and their employing organizations is still not clear. This lack of clarity may be, in itself, a message of concern. While the young trainees often feel that they can communicate with their immediate supervisor, they are frustrated at the lack of dialogue with higher levels of management. While they recognize and understand the traditional and formal channels of communications within organizations, they question the efficacy of such channels and feel the need for additional means of communications.

There appears to be some distortion in understanding of the purposes of communications between agency management and young trainees. "While the trainees are seeking deeper involvement in and understanding of agency goals, with attendant discussions, exchanges of ideas and suggestions, they feel that management regards communications in a rather limited sense -- as a means of exchanging information rather than as a means of generating ideas and unorthodox solutions to problems."

It should be emphasized that the communications problem between young people and agencies is not correlated with particular agency missions. It is common to new and old agencies, as well as to large and small organizations. It is a phenomenon of this generation of young people and the age in which we live.

. need for a continuing and credible structure: Agencies universally cite the existence of both formal and informal channels for the solicitation of young careerists' ideas--suggestion systems, incentive award programs, counseling sessions, open door policies and the like.

Yet as several committees point out, very few of these formal or informal channels provide the two elements that would seem necessary to ensure that the ideas solicited are seriously considered:

- provision of time and resources for the development and staffing out of ideas.
- creation of a structure to evaluate the feasibility of the ideas suggested and to send the approved ideas on to top management with a mark of approval.

Several agencies have already developed continuing structures; most have not. The Office of Education has created an ongoing advisory committee, the Naval Ordnance Base at Indian Head, Maryland has developed an Assistant Management Board. In both cases, adequate time and resources are provided to the members to ensure that suggested ideas can be fully staffed out. Other agencies are exploring possibilities along these lines.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

. the work itself: A striking finding of this study was the interest exhibited by career trainees in their work. The work itself is of paramount importance to young people. They are more concerned about the challenge and meaningfulness of their work than with environmental conditions and fringe benefits. For example, the questionnaire study disclosed that the two most important aspects of the ideal job situation for career trainees were meaningful work and an opportunity for useful accomplishment. Other factors such as salary and advancement (next in importance), pleasant and effective relations with co-workers and supervisors, and organizational climate factors such as working conditions and management practices, are clearly not as important as the work itself. The findings from the questionnaire study were corroborated by the committee reports which laid great stress on challenging and meaningful work for career trainees.

. the challenge: It is significant, but not surprising, that only about half of the respondents feel that their job is as good as they thought it would be when they were hired. Here is an area where agencies can make immense strides. The design of jobs, the assignment of duties, the kind of control exercised over the new employee--all are critical and all lend themselves to immediate and dramatic action by agencies.

. concern for relevance: Appended to this intense interest in the job itself was a deep concern for and consciousness of the relevance of the work to larger issues affecting society as a whole. There is every reason to believe that the youth in the Federal government exhibit the same concerns, the same maturity, the same gropings for worthwhile answers as the rest of the youth of America.

CONTINUED EDUCATION

. relevance of continued education programs is questioned: The continued development of young trainees may be the greatest challenge facing agencies. In addition to meaningful and varied assignments, development efforts include initial orientation to the agency and work situation, formal classroom training, provision of counseling and advisory services by immediate supervisors and others, provision of opportunities for trainees to exchange ideas with agency management, seminars wherein trainees may exchange experiences with their peers, and evaluation systems which provide continuous feedback concerning the progress of the trainee.

The education and counseling of Federal career trainees is rife with problems and discontents. Many trainees are dissatisfied with their rate and direction of development. Much has to be done in this area to make training and education relevant to perceived needs.

The young trainees seem to have an excellent understanding of what is involved in true development. They know that it includes more than formal classroom training. It involves constant exchange and evaluation of experiences, coupled with increasingly more demanding assignments. They are not satisfied with what they have been getting.

. participation of young trainees in designing educational programs is limited: Many young employees are not completely settled as to their choice of occupational field or employer. One quarter of the questionnaire respondents stated that they are not sure what they will do, and another quarter plan to change occupational fields. This highlights the need for involvement and participation by career trainees in the design of their career development programs.

Yet, trainees responding to the questionnaire generally report that they do not participate in designing and planning their own career development programs. Over half the respondents do not believe that their agency has a well-planned training program, and about one-third feel that the formal training they personally have received has not adequately met their expectations in terms of relevance and quality.

Three-fourths of the trainees do feel, however, that they have experienced growth in their skills on their present jobs. This feeling is probably attributable to effective on-the-job training and to job-related academic courses taken by the trainees. About 43% of the respondents reported that they have taken such academic courses since starting Federal employment, including 31% whose course work was paid for in whole or in part by their agencies. Since these courses consume much of the employees' non-work time, energy, and often money, this participation demonstrates the intense interest of career trainees in furthering their own development and growth.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Action generated by the President, consultation between management and young people, and comprehensive survey data, have produced scores of ideas and suggestions. Their utility has been tested in many parts of the Government. They can be sorted into four broad action areas:

- capitalize on the momentum achieved, by continuing activity through youth committees and program direction;
- open up communications, and increase youth participation;
- enhance career and job opportunities;
- increase the relevance and availability of continuing education and counseling.

TO CAPITALIZE ON THE MOMENTUM ACHIEVED

The department and agencies should:

- . assure that the newly established committees are kept alive and broadened by clearcut mandates to explore the feasibility of the suggestions made in the areas of minority group participation and development of linkages between young careerists and academia and to develop action plans for the problems discovered in communications, job opportunities and continued education.
- . establish and continue a position of youth coordinator.

The Civil Service Commission should:

- . designate a director of youth programs
- . establish an interdepartmental youth council
- . encourage all federally-related professional societies to establish divisions for younger members
- . feed back data analysis to each agency, exploring pertinent relationships between questionnaire items and between questionnaire and committee report data.
- . obtain frequent action reports from agencies on progress and innovation; exchange these reports with other agencies through bulletins and workshops.
- . in collaboration with agencies, develop additional awards programs directed specifically toward recognition of outstanding young employee
- . develop a plan for an annual symposium on youth.

TO OPEN UP COMMUNICATIONS AND INCREASE YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The departments and agencies should:

- . consult with and invite the ideas, suggestions and criticisms of youth committees when new policies are being formulated or old policies are being evaluated;
- . develop plans for the creation of structures through which new ideas can be staffed out, researched and communicated to agency executives;
- . arrange for periodic forums in which young employees can exchange information and ideas with middle managers;
- . program special presentations by young employees to senior management staffs.

The Civil Service Commission should:

- . establish, in collaboration with agencies, Junior Executive Panels to meet with and present ideas to Federal Executive Boards and Federal Executive Associations;
- . arrange a program whereby young careerists can meet with their counterparts in other agencies, to discuss problems and other matters of mutual interest.

TO ENHANCE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The departments and agencies should:

- . explore possibilities for improving supervision of career trainees, including: emphasis in supervisory training courses on contributions to be realized from career trainee programs, and on supervisors' responsibilities for developing young trainees; identification of successful supervisors, with appropriate recognition of outstanding supervisors of young people; and techniques for motivating supervisors to improve their skills in supervising and developing young people;
- . periodically review the work content of career trainee assignments, to assure that performance of assigned duties does in fact require the level of competence represented by a bachelor's degree or the equivalent, and that assignments are productive and meaningful;

- . review their personnel practices to assure that the advancement of young employees is as rapid as possible, consistent with demonstrated performance; and that available flexibilities of the promotion system, and alternative means of recognition such as quality salary increases, are fully utilized;
- . establish a means for identifying talented young people who are not college graduates and for developing and encouraging them to become career trainees.

The Civil Service Commission should:

- . increase the scope and frequency of its review of qualification requirements for entry-level positions for college graduates, to assure that all positions so designated do in fact require a college degree;
- . collaborate with agencies in developing an improved system for matching individual interests with job opportunities, including interagency program briefings to inform young people about the tremendous variety of programs represented by the Government as a whole.

TO INCREASE THE RELEVANCE AND AVAILABILITY
OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND COUNSELING

The departments and agencies should:

- . provide orientation training for all young employees, to include: comprehensive explanation of agency internal operations; identification of channels through which young employees can transmit their ideas to top management; information about the agency's support of continued academic training; and an individual orientation interview in which the trainee would be informed of the range of career opportunities open to him;
- . provide advisory or consultative services for young employees outside normal supervisory channels;
- . ascertain trainees' own ideas about what - for them - constitutes work accomplishment, so that training may be better tailored to this objective; insure that trainees participate in the development of training and assignment plans.
- . plan training programs to provide increased opportunities for other-agency assignment or for assignment in the field where such assignment will make a useful contribution to development;

11

- . conduct public affairs seminars for career trainees - individually or on a resource-sharing basis with other agencies;
- . provide special assignments, such as interesting and useful pieces of research, for trainees.

The Civil Service Commission should:

- . sponsor workshops with colleges and universities to explore new models for continuing education programs;
- . explore possibilities for increased intern rotation among different agencies.

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